

REMARKS

Applicant's invention is a method for time stamping digital documents so that the date of the document can be verified. The method relies on the services of a trusted agent, referred to as the Time Stamping Authority (TSA). The TSA has a time-based signature key that the TSA uses to sign time stamp receipts. The time-based signature key changes at predetermined time intervals. Each signature key is associated with a fixed time reference. To obtain a certified time stamp, a requestor sends a document to be certified or other identifying data, such as a hash of the document, to the TSA. The TSA creates a time stamp receipt by computing a time difference between the time reference associated with the current signature key and the time the document was received. The time difference is appended to the identifying data received by the TSA to create the time stamp receipt, and the receipt is then signed by the TSA and transmitted to the requestor.

The Examiner has rejected claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by Haber, U.S. Patent No. 5,136,647. Haber discloses a method for time stamping digital documents. In Haber, the document originator hashes the document and transmits the hash value to the TSA. The TSA appends the current date and time to the hash value to create a time stamp receipt and digitally signs the time stamp receipt with a private signature key to certify the time stamp.

The time stamping method disclosed in Haber differs substantially from the claimed invention. In Haber, the TSA appends a representation of the current time to the hash value or identifying data to generate the time stamp receipt. In the claimed invention, the TSA computes a time difference between the current time and a predetermined time reference, and the time difference is appended to the hash value or identifying data to create the time stamp receipt. In Haber, the time stamp is not associated with a particular time reference. In the claimed invention, the predetermined time reference used to compute the time difference for the time stamp receipt is associated with the signature key. In fact, there is no need in Haber to

associate a time reference with the signature key since the time stamp receipt is includes an absolute time reference. In the claimed invention, the time value associated with the time receipt is a relative time value and the time reference is needed in order to verify the date of the document.

For the reasons set forth above, it is believed that the claims as originally filed define over the prior art made of record by the Examiner. Accordingly, allowance of the application is therefore respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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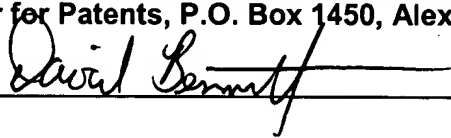
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